

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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## News Release

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Mike and Peggy Eubank and Marlene Schumm scan the fields of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge for birds as a part of the International Big Sit. The Alligator River Big Sit Team recorded 40 species of birds from their location near the intersection of Milltail and Sawyer Lake Roads. A Refuge stake-body truck was used as a stage to gain elevation needed for viewing, reducing the 17' diameter circle to a much smaller rectangle! On Pea Island, the Big Sit Team reported 90 species counted from the North Pond Observation Tower.

credit: FWS, Bonnie Strawser

### Pea Island and Alligator River Big Sits Report 90 and 40 Bird Species, Respectively

What an incredible day in the great outdoors! Sunday, October 14, was designated by Birdwatchers' Digest as the day for the most

"sedentary birding" of the year. Around the world, birders chose their 17' diameter circles, placed their lawn chairs, spotting scopes, coolers and lunch boxes, and racked back for a long day in the great outdoors! Pea Island's Big Sit Team, led by Jeff Lewis, reported 90 species of birds- likely setting a new North Carolina record. On the Alligator River Big Sit, 40 bird species were seen, along with 8 black bears and a bobcat! At this writing, with 29 circles reporting from a total of 191 circles registered for the event, Pea Island was maintaining it's place as first for the state and third for the world!

Bonnie Strawser, Interpretive Specialist for the refuges, commented, "Though it is unlikely Pea Island's count will maintain its current international position, it will likely be one of the top ten species lists for the 2007 event. And, it will probably end up in first place for the state. The 2006 first place Big Sit for North Carolina recorded only 49 species of birds." Visit <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/results07/stats.php> to monitor results as they are submitted.

Bucket Taylor, organizer for the Alligator River event, described his day as, "perhaps one of the best days outside ever. And the people were just great!" The local refuge events were sponsored by the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society, the non-profit support group for these refuges, of which Bucket is a director.

Jeff Lewis, organizer for the Pea Island Big Sit, provided the following information to the Refuge and the Carolina Birds List Serve: "We started at 6 am and lasted until 4 pm, ending up with 90 species, plus an additional 6 that were just out of range. They included a Clay-colored Sparrow, a White-crowned Sparrow, a Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warbler.

Highlights of what we did count included one American White Pelican, Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, American Bittern, Glossy Ibis, 32 Snow Geese, hundreds of Avocets and Marbled Godwits, hundreds of Black Skimmers, Bobolink, Blue Grosbeak, Seaside Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (great scope looks). We had lots of warblers but only 6 species. We looked through thousands of waterfowl but missed Eurasian Wigeon."

In all, at least 17 people participated in the two local Big Sits. For more information about the event, visit <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx> . To learn about other opportunities on local national wildlife refuges, contact Bonnie Strawser at 252-473-1131 ext 230 or [bonnie\\_strawser@fws.gov](mailto:bonnie_strawser@fws.gov).